

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

041255Z Jun 03

UNCLAS HARARE 001133

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PDPA DALTON, MITCHELL AND SIMS AND AF/S RAYNOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION MASS ACTION IN ZIM; HARARE

11. Editorials in the June 4 editions of the two national dailies - the independent "Daily News" and the government-controlled "Herald," continue to focus on the on-going nationwide anti-government protests that are expected to end on Friday, June 6. The demonstrations, organized by the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), have kept the country at a standstill since Monday. Excerpts:

12. Under headline "Crushing protests not the solution" the independent daily "The Daily News" (06/04) comments:

"In forcefully crushing the street protests of the opposition MDC this week, President Robert Mugabe's government also unwittingly tied a burdensome and tricky knot around its neck. By authorizing the deployment of thousands of army troops and police to snuff out the protests just as they were being launched, the government could find itself facing a dilemma of when to pull out these forces from the streets, if at all. . . Indeed, can the use of military might alone buy the government more time in power, in the face of overwhelming public discontent with its rule. . .? Unfortunately, the hardening positions of both the government and the MDC, let alone the poisoned timing, do not favor meaningful inter-party talks that must necessarily focus on governance issues that have triggered Zimbabwe's collapse. . . A harsh military clampdown on protests by concerned citizens certainly does not offer a lasting solution."

13. Under headline "Tsvangirai overestimating popularity" the government-controlled daily "The Herald" (06/04) comments:

"Monday marked the beginning of what MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai and his Western handlers hoped would be a week of mass demonstrations tailored to topple the democratically elected government of President Robert Mugabe. Well, that did not happen and once again Tsvangirai was left with egg in the face. His Western handlers, who we understand poured billions of dollars into the futile exercise, must be particularly red in the face. . . No, Tsvangirai, Zimbabweans don't need your sacrifice. . . We think Tsvangirai is overestimating his popularity and fear that he will get a nasty jolt come presidential polls in 2008. We join other peace-loving Zimbabweans in congratulating our security forces for rising to the occasion and ensuring that misguided elements do not rampage through our cities, destroying property and looting, as is their wont."

SULLIVAN